

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Teach For America

Application ID: 14ES157348

Program Name: Teach For America-Chicago

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

#### Reviewers' Summary Comments:

##### Strengths:

The applicant clearly states there is a need for better teachers to address the mission to improve student achievement, since 85% of the total student population in the city come from low income families in Chicago whereas the average nine-year-old is three grade levels behind his or her affluent peers.

The applicant indicates that providing highly quality teachers to teach in low income areas will increase student graduating from high school.

The applicant identifies a shortage of teachers in the target area.

The applicant sufficiently provided local data to support one of their stated problems and needs which was a shortage of highly qualified educators.

The applicant surveyed principals and teachers to obtain a quality report on Teach for America's program goals and success rate.

The applicant provided sufficient data to support the increase they stated they would accomplish with the program.

The applicant proposes to provide one-on-one ongoing support to Members, including classroom observation and feedback. Program coaches maintain an 18:1 ratio of AmeriCorps members to program coaches to ensure individualized support.

The application describes that 70% of TFA-Chicago members will gain the direct knowledge and skills to teach in low-income schools.

The applicant anticipates that 70% of TFA-Chicago members' opinions on the problem of educational inequity, as well as their deep belief in its solvability, will change.

The applicant provided a sufficient list of activities and services from AmeriCorps members.

During the applicant's first year as a grantee in 2012-2013, 999 students were taught by AmeriCorps members, with 80% attaining at least 1.5 years of improvement in their grade level.

During the applicant's first grantee year, 100% of 28 new second grade teachers returned to teach a second year because of the success of the program.

The applicant demonstrates that they have effectively completed past projects and met their goals. For example, the applicant describes that during the 2012-2013 program year, 50 TFA-Chicago AmeriCorps members were placed on the state AmeriCorps grant. Among the 999 students taught by AmeriCorps members, 80% of them attained at least 1.5 years of grade growth or more. Twenty-eight of the AmeriCorps members were first-year teachers, and 100% of them returned for their second year of teaching this fall. All of the 22 second-year teachers stayed in the education field after their two-year commitment, with 12 remaining in the classroom. Of the other 10 alumni, seven work at education nonprofits, two work at schools as support staff, and one studies education policy at Harvard University.

The applicant provided numerous studies, both experimental and non-experimental, which addressed the effectiveness of Teach for America's Teachers on students.

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide data to support what qualifies their teachers as being highly qualified to teach students in low income families and how this will increase students' life opportunities.

The applicant does not provide sufficient data to support the claim that students in the target area are performing lower than average.

The applicant does not provide data to justify their selection of the target communities.

The applicant claims that as of November 2013, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) still had 130 special education vacancies for the 2013-14 school year. However, the applicant does not provide any evidence or data source to support the claim.

The applicant provided brief or cursory information regarding the baseline academic performance of the target population. The applicant provides brief information regarding the low-income status of the students; however, this was not aligned with the students' current academic performance.

The applicant did not clearly state how the success of the program would be measured (e.g., whether it would be measured on classroom or individual student success).

The applicant proposes to use pre- and post-surveys to measure the change in TFA-Chicago members' opinions on the problem of educational inequity as well as their deep belief in its solvability; however the applicant provides no baseline to measure the change.

The applicant did not provide adequate data for the 2012-2013 school year to support the attributing factors of the 20% failure rating of the 999 students.

The applicant provided sufficient data to support the effectiveness of Teach For America Teachers on students; however, the academic outcomes of students are unclear from the lack of baseline data.

The applicant did not state how the pool of 615 volunteers would be screened or selected to offer support to the teachers through classroom visits.

The application was for the recruitment of high school teachers to increase graduation participation among low income high school students, but in fact the teachers recruited were for elementary school age students.

The applicant achieved success last year but did not meet the expectations that they had foreseen with the grant proposal. They did not reach the pre-determined number of students they specified. The AmeriCorps members were to have had an impact 48 high school students, but in actuality only reached 20-30 elementary school age students.